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# BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL

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*Correspondents are urged to write briefly so that readers may be offered as wide a selection of letters as possible. So many are being received that the omission of some is inevitable. Letters must be signed personally by all their authors.*

## So we'll go no more a-jogging . . .

SIR,—When a thoughtful niece gave me a paperback on jogging I knew my future was being eyed and threatened. Too many relatives find my retirement an irresistible signal for urging me to "give up this" and "take up that"—and perversely getting them the wrong way round. The evidence that jogging does a lot of good seems to me quite underwhelming. Still, I believe part of what I am told—that 20 minutes of jogging would be just a token trot, doing nothing convincing for the health.

So sitting myself down with yet another gift, a pocket calculator, I did some sums. That was a mistake, for the answers were palpably ridiculous. Instead I went back to my old-fashioned arithmetic and worked it out like this. If you jog for two hours a day you are jogging for one-eighth of your working life. If, then, as a result you live to 72 instead of 64, what have you achieved? The privilege of jogging for one-eighth of your one-eighth longer life. Very well, but does it make you happier? There are joggers' vests on which are emblazoned the motto: "I'm a happy hoover." Yet the only happy hoover faces I have seen appear in pictures done for an advertisement or some special occasion and obviously posed and composed (well, not decomposed).

They all say they feel alert and happy, but when I see addicts jogging along the highway they look grim and resigned: as well they might be, for everything seems against them. The 25 million regular joggers in the United States are objects of hatred to motorists, who dispute their rights on the road and hurl at them insults and beer cans. Can the explanation

be that in the non-jogging and therefore overweight motorists the thin man who is always fighting to get out of every fat man (as one theory has it) takes charge and relieves his envy by aggression? It is not hard to understand why joggers look unhappy. They have to give up so much that they could enjoy effortlessly and without undergoing the monotony of a treadmill. And they cannot expect any remission of sentence for good conduct—only an extension. The thought of those eight extra years of miserable existence does not entice everybody.

Why, then, do joggers jog? Are we really expected to believe it is necessary to jog because our forebears in the wild hunted for a living? If they went at that jogging pace they would not have caught much—except such ridiculous animals as were also jogging. So many modern joggers parade the paunchy pear-shape of middle age. Those primitive hunters who, we are led to believe, kept their blood cholesterol down and their coronaries open by exercise were dead long before they could ever reach middle age. I would not affirm that the exercise they had to take actually killed them; but I do wonder if exercise late in adult life has the same supposedly good effects on metabolism as before the endocrine orchestra changes from the spring song to the slow march.

Joggers differ from walkers because both feet are off the ground at the same time and from runners because they can keep up a conversation with a companion jogger. But what would they be conversing about? Their

athlete's feet, perhaps?—or their jogger's kidney, which it seems some diagnose as pseudonephritis by examining their urine when they get home after a jog. Bra-less lady joggers bouncing along the road could discuss what I am told they refer to as "jogger's breasts"; and men, who may suffer from "jogger's nipples," can debate whether to pad them or rub in Vaseline. How unattractive it all seems!

My position, then, is that even though jogging is claimed to be an aerobic exercise and non-competitive I refuse to keep what is grandly called a "motivational diary" or to follow the advice to "jog tall." Balletomane Arnold Haskell once wrote: "We must remember that the dancer is both the instrument and the instrumentalist." Jogging may be self-expressive, but never will I concede that it is elegant, aesthetic, or an art form; and to those who might still seek to persuade I shall quote from a Dadaist manifesto: "Any work of art which can be understood is the product of a journalist."

Every few years I tune up my synapses by going in for some quite novel activity. Among the more recent are clarinetting, charity collecting, and conservation. I shall tell my thoughtful niece that blowing, rattling, and preserving keep me fit and amused without any need to jog—except, alas, for my memory.

JOHN APLEY

Bath, Avon

## Cefamandole and beta-lactamases

SIR,—Standardised data sheets on new drugs are a relatively recent and very valuable service to the medical profession. We must necessarily assume that these sheets incorporate the latest and most reliable published evidence relating